

FROM ANTI-SEMITISM TO ISRAELMANIA

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the 19th century theological developments by John Nelson Darby and C.I. Scofield and the transition from historical Christianity's belief about the Jews to the modern Evangelical view of the Jews and the modern nation of Israel. I demonstrate how the doctrines of Darby and Scofield have influenced American politicians, and by extension, America's foreign policy and how these doctrines have shaped mainstream Christianity's public opinion of Israel. I then analyze, through a Biblical framework, one of the most controversial questions of all time: Who are God's chosen people?

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Introduction

There is perhaps no greater phenomenon in the international system than the modern state of Israel. From its establishment on May 14, 1948, Israel has generated a wide range of emotions as well as racial and ethnic conflict in the Middle Eastern region and is considered one of the most historically significant events of the twentieth century. Prior to 1948 the Jews were scattered throughout the world without a homeland. The state was formed specifically as a nationalist Jewish state where Jews could reside in peace and be protected from persecution, or anti-Semitism. According to Avi Shlaim, an Iraqi-born Israeli/British historian, in his book, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*:

A much tougher kind of Zionism was forged in the course of World War II, and the commitment to Jewish statehood became deeper and more desperate in the shadow of the Holocaust. On the one hand, the Holocaust confirmed the conviction of the Zionists that they had justice on their side in the struggle for Palestine; on the other, it converted international public opinion to the idea of an independent Jewish state (Shlaim 2001, 24).

Jewish occupation of Palestine has generated enormous feelings of hostility from the Palestinians, who previously occupied the area of Israel prior to 1948. The question of who rightly owns this Middle Eastern region has become a hot topic of both political and religious debate. In America, the allegiance of the majority of politicians and the American people rest with the Jewish people. Israel is the only democratic country in the Middle East as well as America's sole ally in the Middle East. America has had other ally countries in its past, but never have politicians or the public ever been so adamantly devoted to a foreign nation. A great deal of this support has been generated by Evangelical Christians and theologians, such as John Hagee. Particularly in recent years, Evangelical Christians, pastors, and even politicians have promoted unquestionable support for Israel, both militarily and financially, which is a practice we have never exercised with any other nation to this extreme. The unique relationship between Israel

and many Christian Americans' attitudes toward Israel and the Jews has caused many, including myself, to question the origin of this fanatic devotion. What is it that has precipitated this relatively new concept of unquestionable and unwavering loyalty to a foreign nation? Is it political? Is it religious? This phenomenon largely rests on the belief of modern Evangelical Christians and theologians that the Jews are God's chosen people and opposition to the Jewish people is opposition to God Himself. In this thesis, I will identify the theological roots of this doctrine, known as Zionism, explain the consequences of Zionism, and then, from a Biblical perspective, craft an argument that answers the question: Who are God's chosen people?

Historical Christianity and Judaism

First, it is interesting to note that the Christian doctrine of the Jew's being God's chosen people has not been an historical Christian belief. The phenomenon of Christian Zionism is relatively recent. They maintain that the Jews are and will always be God's chosen people, or "the apple of God's eye," referring to Zechariah 2:8 in the Bible. However, the traditional view of Christianity has adhered to what is now often referred to as "replacement theology," usually used opponents of the ideology. Replacement theology refers to the belief maintained mostly by Christians that the Jews are no longer the chosen people of God in light of the New Testament. The (universal) Church, rather than physical Israel, are now the chosen people of God. The Church is considered "spiritual Israel" by proponents of replacement theology. This has historically been the view of Christianity.

From a Jewish perspective, Christianity has been historically anti-Semitic. Many well-known Christian theologians through the centuries have preached replacement theology, most notably Catholic theologians. One of whom was John Chrysostom (AD 344-407), an early

church father and Bishop of Antioch and considered one of the greatest preachers of his time, stated concerning the Jews in a series of sermons called *Adversus Judaeos*, or *Against the Jews*:

The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, rapacious, greedy. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the Devil. Their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever...The Jews sacrifice their children to Satan. They are worse than wild beasts. The Synagogue is a brothel, a den of scoundrels, the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults, a criminal assembly of Jews, a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, a gulf and abyss of perdition.

The Jews have fallen into a condition lower than the vilest animal. Debauchery and drunkenness have brought them to a level of the lusty goat and the pig...The Synagogue is a curse, obstinate in her error, she refuses to see or hear, she has deliberately perverted her judgment; she has extinguished with herself the light of the Holy Spirit...But it was men, says the Jew, who brought these misfortunes upon us, not God. On the contrary, it was in fact God who brought them about. If you attribute them to men, reflect again that even supposing men had dared, they could not have had the power to accomplish them, unless it had been God's will. Men would certainly not have made war unless God had permitted them. Is it not obvious that it was because God hated you and rejected you once for all? (*Against the Jews*, Turner 2014, The Jerusalem Post).

Chrysostom's views reflect what was widely believed about the Jews during his time and the hostility that was held against Jews because they were considered the "God killers." 1

Thessalonians 2:15 charges the Jews with crucifying Jesus Christ, stating, "Who [Jews] both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets." Even though the Romans were the ones who physically laid hands on Jesus and crucified Him, 1 Thessalonians charges the Jews with that act, and many of the early church fathers agreed with that sentiment. Jews were seen as a people who rejected Christ and were therefore rejected by God.

Martin Luther (AD 1483-1546), a German priest, professor of theology, and the leader of the Protestant Reformation, concurred with Chrysostom's views about the Jews and Judaism. In the last book he wrote before he died, *The Jews and Their Lies*, he makes scriptural arguments for why the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and he also exposes what are considered the blasphemous teachings of the Jewish Talmud, which serves as the chief book of the laws of Judaism. Writing in 1543, a few years before his death, Luther dedicates Parts 1-10 of his book comparing Christians and Christianity with Jews and Judaism, and in Parts 11, 12, and 13, he called for the Jews to give up Judaism and convert to Christianity. If they refuse, then Luther argued that they should be kicked out of all Christian lands. In addition, Luther advocated for the burning of Jewish synagogues, destroying the Talmud, the execution of rabbis, the abolishment of usury, and for the Jews to be forced into manual labor (Luther 1543). Other early church leaders, such as St. Augustine (AD 354 - 430), Peter the Venerable (AD 1092 - 1156), and John Calvin (AD 1509 - 1564), held these views as well. The vast majority of early church fathers and early Protestant leaders essentially held the same views regarding Jews and Judaism, and these views are in stark contrast to the mainstream view of them in Christianity today.

Martin Luther's call in *The Jews and Their Lies* for the expulsion of Jews from all Christian lands was already a reality in 1543 and would continue to be a common practice among European nations for the next several hundred years. For example, in 1290 AD, King Edward I issued an Edict of Expulsion that kicked out the Jews from England and required that any Jews who remained in England after November 1, 1290 would be executed. This edict was eventually reversed by Oliver Cromwell in 1649 when he received support from the British parliament to execute King Charles I for treason. However, for 359 years, Jews were forbidden to live in England, and this is not an isolated example. The Jews are the only people in the world who have

encountered persecution in almost every country where they have lived in large numbers. Today it is widely believed that the roots of “anti-Semitism” began in Germany in the 1930s under the reign of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Hitler also tried to expel the Jews from Germany. The Nazi’s proposed the Madagascar Plan, which advocated for the Jews in Germany and the rest of Europe be relocated to Madagascar. However, the origins of Jewish hostility go back much further than the 1930s. England expelled the Jews before Germany, and England was not the first country to expel the Jews either. In fact, the Jews at one time or another have been kicked out from almost every nation in Europe. In Andrew Hitchcock’s book, *The Synagogue of Satan*, he gives a partial listing of the countries and areas from which the Jews have been expelled over the last thousand years. They include: Mainz (1012), France (1182), Upper Bavaria (1276), England (1290), France (1306), France (1322), Saxony (1349), Hungary (1360), Belgium (1370), Slovakia (1380), France (1394), Austria (1420), Lyons (1420), Cologne (1424), Mainz (1438), Augsburg (1438), Upper Bavaria (1442), Netherlands (1444), Brandenburg (1446), Mainz (1462), Lithuania (1495), Portugal (1496), Naples (1496), Navarre (1498), Nuremberg (1498), Brandenburg (1510), Prussia (1510), Genoa (1515), Naples (1533), Italy (1540), Naples (1541), Prague (1541), Genoa (1550), Bavaria (1551), Prague (1557), Papal States (1569), Hungary (1582), Hamburg (1649), Vienna (1669), Slovakia (1744), Mainz (1483), Warsaw (1483), Spain (1492), Italy (1492), Moravia (1744), Bohemia (1744), and Moscow (1891) (Hitchcock 2012).

As can be observed, there have been many countries (some on several different occasions), that have expelled the Jews from their lands. The validities for their expulsion will not be explored in this thesis, but the attitude toward Jews and Judaism can be clearly demonstrated by their expulsion from multiple countries and lands and the attitudes of early Christian leaders.

Jesus in the Talmud

Regardless of what one believes about the Jews or whether or not they are the chosen people of God, Christianity and Judaism are two different religions. Modern Christians mistakenly believe that Judaism and Christianity are “sister” religions, but the early church leaders previously mentioned would have rejected the notion of “Judeo-Christianity.” The primary reason, however, that Judaism and Christianity are dissimilar is the most obvious fact that they do not agree on the identity of the messiah. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the messiah, but the Judaism rejects Jesus as messiah and believes that the messiah has not yet come to the earth. Also, modern Evangelical Christianity widely believes that the Jews believe the Old Testament in the Bible, and it is only the New Testament where their unbelief begins. However, Judaism largely views the Old Testament as a book of myths, and Judaism itself does not even claim to believe in the Old Testament as a whole. Although Judaism does claim belief in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the Talmud is Judaism’s chief doctrinal document (Schäfer 2007, 95-97).

Peter Schäfer, head of Judaic Studies at Princeton University, writes extensively on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in his book *Jesus in the Talmud*. As previously stated, the Jewish Talmud is the founding and primary document of rabbinic Judaism, consisting of 36 volumes that contain the oracles of the elders of Judaism. Many Christians today are unaware of what the most exalted text of Judaism has to say about Jesus Christ. According to the Talmud, Jesus was a bastard conceived by Mary, but she was not a virgin. Instead Mary committed adultery with a Roman soldier named Panthera, making Jesus the bastard son of Panthera. In fact, the Talmud ridicules the idea of Jesus being born of a virgin. Both the Talmud and the Bible attest to the supernatural powers of Jesus, but they differ as to how those powers

were acquired. The Bible maintains that Jesus is God in the flesh, so He possessed all the powers of the Most High. But the Talmud teaches that Jesus was a sorcerer who learned black magic in Egypt, which is, in a sense, an inversion of the New Testament. However, the most ardent claim about Jesus in the Talmud is that He is in hell boiling forever in hot excrement (Schäfer 2007). Not all Jews may hold to this view, but this is the official position of Judaism which may have contributed to the persecution throughout the ages.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Ultimately, the writings of the early church leaders, the Talmud, and some conspiratorial writings contributed to what led to the greatest persecution of the Jews, the Holocaust. One of the conspiratorial writings that has not been confirmed (nor actually fully refuted either) is a mysterious document that emerged in the early 1900s known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. *The Protocols* detail an alleged meeting in which Jewish world leaders discussed the implementation of plans for world domination. Several aspects of this plan include economic and financial control, perpetual warfare, moral subversion of Gentile nations, and taking control of the press and all other forms of media. In all there are 24 protocols detailed in the book, but none are very specific. Adolf Hitler was a huge proponent of *The Protocols*, calling for the expulsion of Jews from Germany due to their alleged monopoly on institutions, usury, and many of the accusations not only from *The Protocols*, but also from the early church fathers. Henry Ford was also a major proponent of the document, funding over half a million copies of it and distributing it throughout the United States. Again, the historical validity of the 24 protocols are beyond the bounds of this thesis, but they further illustrate the mindset toward Jews prior to their becoming a nation in 1948.

The Change in Christian Theology

Clearly, the attitude toward the Jews and the modern state of Israel are in stark contrast to those of the past, especially in historic Christianity. How then did this new mindset come about? Who are the architects for what we know today as Christian Zionism? There are two individuals who are primarily responsible for the widespread acceptance of this theology – John Nelson Darby (1800 – 1882) and Cyrus I. Scofield (1843 – 1922).

John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby was born in 1800 in Kings County, England. He attended Westminster School in England and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. After graduation, he became a priest, and after serving for a period of time, he became cynical about the conventional structure of organized religion and mainstream Christianity in the Anglican Church. Darby began hosting his own gatherings for a more informal and relaxed setting of fellowship where he began to create his own doctrines that differed from the official positions of the church. These new doctrines were originally labeled as Darbyism, but later became what we know today as dispensationalism. He wrote many volumes of material regarding dispensationalism and traveled the world preaching these new doctrines. Switzerland, France, Italy, Germany, New Zealand, and even Canada were among some of the countries in which he preached.

One of the central new doctrines that was generally new to Christianity was the end-times notion of a “secret rapture.” The Bible refers to a period called the Great Tribulation near the end of the world in which famine, war, destruction, pestilence, and a tyrannical one-world government occur near the end of the world. Darby introduced a new distinction into Christian theology – separating physical Israel (i.e. the seed of Abraham) and the New Testament church. Darby advocated that the purpose of the rapture is to remove the Christian church from the earth

up to heaven while God uses the seven-year tribulation period to draw the Jews back to Him and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Darby's Dispensations

Dispensationalism divides all of Biblical history from the creation story all the way to the end of the world, and according to Darby, there are seven of these dispensations. Not all of the aspects of these dispensations are contended, but non-dispensationalist Christians speculate that Darby's new classification arbitrarily mirrors the seven days of creation, making them seem more credible. According to the *Scofield Reference Bible* (which will be addressed shortly), a dispensation is defined as:

a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. Three important concepts are implied in this definition: (1) a deposit of divine revelation concerning God's will, embodying what God requires of man as to his conduct; (2) man's stewardship of this Divine revelation, in which he is responsible to obey it, and (3) a period of time, often called an "age," during which this divine revelation is dominant in the testing of man's obedience to God (Dean 2015, 11).

Darby's first dispensation is called *innocence*. This particular dispensation describes the time in the early chapters of Genesis following the six days of creation (and one day of God's rest) in which Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden, a perfect and uncorrupted environment inhabited by uncorrupt creation. When God had finished creating the world, man, animals, and plants, He looked upon His creation and "saw that it was very good." Humanity was created in perfection and was tested for obedience in the Garden of Eden when God forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning them that if they did so, they would die. However, Eve was tempted by the serpent (Satan), and offered the fruit from the tree to Adam, and they both partook of the fruit. As a result, the first dispensation ended with spiritual death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The second dispensation is *conscience*. Now that humanity had sinned and been kicked out of the Garden of Eden, sin and death entered into the world. Now they had a practical knowledge of good and evil instead of just theoretical. Humanity was now obligated with moral responsibility to choose between good and evil.

The third dispensation is the implantation of *human government*, following Noah's ark and the worldwide flood. Due to the depravity of humanity and the earth being filled with violence, God flooded the entire planet, wiping out all life except those of Noah and his family and the animals on the ark. Following the flood, God informally instituted the death penalty in Genesis 9:

5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

This punishment was instituted following God's promise to Noah that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood again as a means of controlling violence in the earth. Before this decree, a murderer would merely flee to a city of refuge, such as Cain did following the murder of his brother Abel.

The fourth dispensation, and the most important dispensation to the modern doctrine of Zionism, is the dispensation of *promise*. This dispensation began with the call of Abram, whose name changed to Abraham, and lasted until the giving of the law to Moses and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. The main scripture for both the establishment of this dispensation and for preachers to teach their congregations that in order to receive blessings from God, we must bless Israel at all costs, comes from Genesis 12:

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The notes in the *Scofield Reference Bible* contain the following regarding the Dispensation of Promise:

Observe (1) the specific provisions affecting Abram himself (Gen. 15:15) and his son and Grandson, Isaac, and Jacob under which individual blessing depended upon individual obedience (Gen. 12:1; cp. 22:18, 26:5). (2) God made an unconditional promise of blessing through Abram's seed (a) to the nation of Israel to inherit a specific territory forever (Genesis 12:12, 15:18-21; 17:7-8) (b) the Church as in Christ, (Galatians 3:16, 28-29); and (c) to the Gentile nations (Gen. 12:3). (3) There was a promise of blessing upon those individuals and nations who bless Abram's descendants, and a curse laid upon those who persecute the Jews (Gen. 12:3, Matthew 25:31-46). Consequently the dispensation had varied emphasis. To the Gentiles of that period, there was little direct application other than the test implied by Gen. 12:3 and illustrated by God's blessing or judgment upon individuals (Pharaoh and Abimelech or nations, e.g. Egypt who treated Abram or his descendants well. In the continuance through the centuries of this stewardship of truth, believers in the Church age are called upon to trust God as Abram did, and thus enter into the blessing of the covenant which inaugurated the dispensation of Promise. The dispensation of Promise was superseded by Law, though not annulled by the law which was given at Mount Sinai (Dean 2015, 13-14).

The main takeaway that resulted from Darby's dispensationalism that has affected modern evangelicalism is the belief that physical Israel, Abraham's descendants, are to be blessed by church congregations and the American government no matter what, regardless of what Israel believes or its policies.

The fifth dispensation is the dispensation of *law*, and began with the giving of the law to Moses at Mount Sinai and concluded with the crucifixion of Christ. This dispensation covers most of the Old Testament from Exodus all the way to Malachi.

The sixth dispensation is referred to as the *church age*, based upon Matthew 16:18, where Jesus stated to Peter, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

Finally, Darby’s seventh and final dispensation is that of *the millennial kingdom*. This dispensation describes the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem when he comes back to the earth to rule the nations with a rod of iron. It concludes with the Great White Throne Judgment after Satan’s final attempt at rebellion.

The legitimacy of the third, fourth (especially), and sixth dispensations are debatable. Concerning human government, Exodus is where the law of Moses is introduced to the children of Israel. Genesis 9:6 could arguably be the Biblical origin of the death penalty, even though there is no compelling assertion that human government began immediately after the flood. This is particularly true in light of the fact that at this time, there were only eight people and one family on the earth, and thousands, if not millions, of people had existed on the earth. It is unlikely that no form of human government had existed prior to the flood. This is speculation, but if there is arguably a more likely origin of human government, that would be during the fifth dispensation.

The *church age* is also problematic. According to Darby, this is the age, or dispensation, in which we are currently living. However, even though the New Testament church became prominent after the resurrection of Christ, an assembly and gathering of believers is not a new concept. The church does not refer to a building but rather an assembly. In the Bible, the word “church” is interchangeable with “congregation.” This can be evidenced by comparing Psalm 22:22 and Hebrews 2:12. Hebrews 2:12 is a repetition in the New Testament of Psalm 22:22 in the Old Testament. Psalm 22:22 says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of

the *congregation* will I praise thee.” Hebrews 2:12 says, “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the *church* will I praise thee.” There is a song whose lyrics are, “The church is not a building, and the church is not a steeple. The church is the people.” The Bible agrees with this by using “church” and “congregation” interchangeably. The church is an assembly of believers, which existed in the Old Testament as well among the nation of Israel. If we are now exclusive in the church age, then Darby’s theology flies in the face of Ephesians 3:21, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus *throughout all ages*, world without end. Amen.”

The fourth dispensation is the most erroneous of the seven and is where Christian Zionism was doctrinally conceived. The dispensation of promise calls for unconditional blessing of the nation of Israel and maintains that the Jews are God’s chosen people. It is refuted at the end of this thesis.

Cyrus I. Scofield

Although John Darby is considered the father of dispensationalism, he is not its primary distributor. That role would go to a man named Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (or C.I. Scofield). C.I. Scofield is the one primarily responsible for spreading Darby’s dispensational theology to the masses.

Before becoming a pastor, Scofield was a federal district attorney, but due to multiple scandals, he fled his home in Kansas in 1873, abandoning his wife and children. Following an alleged religious conversion in 1912, Scofield began a fellowship with Reverend James Brookes of the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri and also with Dwight L. Moody, both of whom were followers of Darby and subscribed to dispensationalism. In the following years, Scofield formed the Hyde Park Presbyterian Church, where he served as pastor, and then

also served as pastor of a church in Dallas, Texas. He and his first wife, Leontine Cerre, divorced in 1883, and Scofield remarried a woman from his congregation in Dallas. Due to the success and growth of Scofield's church in Dallas, he became superintendent of his church's sponsoring organization, the American Home Missionary Society. This allowed him the opportunity to travel the country and teach at numerous churches and Bible conferences, and as a result, spread the doctrine of dispensationalism throughout the country. As his popularity increased, he wrote his first book in 1888, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. The title of the book was based from 2 Timothy 2:15, which states, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Dividing the word of truth served as the basis for dividing the Bible into seven dispensations (Dean 2015, 7). Shortly after the publication of his book, Scofield became head of the Southwestern School of the Bible, which would eventually become the Dallas Theological Seminary. Here Scofield launched a Bible study plan that was very pro-dispensationalism to thousands all over the world.

Leading up to the publication of the well-known Scofield Reference Bible, Scofield was invited to join a secret society known as the Lotus Club. At the Lotus Club Scofield was introduced to Samuel Untermyer, a well-known defense attorney in New York. Untermyer was a strong proponent of Zionism, which essentially began in 1897 with the creation of the World Zionist Conference. Headed by Theodor Herzl, its goal was to create a settlement for the Jewish people in their original homeland. Scofield's dispensational theology and the Zionist agenda to create a Jewish homeland played a critical role in the footnotes in the Scofield Reference Bible. According to David Lance Dean, author of *Christian Zionism and the Scofield Reference Bible*, the Zionist Jews used Scofield and his reference Bible to implement their agenda:

Zionist Jews wanted to capture the adherents of the Christian faith and bring them into a cooperative promotion and alliance with the Zionist agenda. Historically, that had not been possible. However, with the emergence of John Darby's dispensational theology and the many converts he gained in America, this whole new paradigm came into existence. Cyrus Scofield had perfected the teaching over at least two decades before he made his connection with Samuel Untermyer. The clincher for the deal was that Zionist interests sought to make inroads into the American Christian community that had historically not existed (Dean 2015, 8).

Untermyer and Scofield then arranged to have Scofield's reference Bible published by Oxford University Press, which had a publishing house in New York. The first edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909, and millions of dollars were spent to promote it. There have been at least three revisions of the book since its first publication, one by Scofield in 1917 and then two more by Oxford University press in 1945 and 1967.

The effects of this book were quite far-reaching in that there were millions of copies sold following its publication. The *Scofield Reference Bible* not only made dispensationalism a fundamental Christian doctrine in American churches but also cemented the idea of physical Israel being the chosen people of God. A consequence of that doctrine was that Israel was considered blessed and supported in all circumstances, regardless of any wrongdoing. This book along with its footnotes changed the thinking of an entire generation of young preachers and spread Darby's dispensationalism to most mainstream Christian churches denominations in America (Canfield 2015). According to David Dean, the bridge between Zionist Jews and Christianity was completed, and thus began Israelmania in America.

Christian Zionism in America

With the publication and distribution of the *Scofield Reference Bible* and the founding of Israel in 1948, Christian Zionism has now fully permeated American churches. Pastors across America have joined hands with the religion of Judaism, which is, for the most part,

unprecedented. Christianity and Judaism have been adversarial since the very beginning, and this new way of thinking would have been foreign to the early church fathers and Christian leaders. The most prominent Christian Zionist preacher is, arguably, John Hagee, founder and pastor of Cornerstone Church, a megachurch in San Antonio, Texas. Hagee is also the founder and chairman of the Zionist organization, Christians United for Israel or (CUFI). If examining Hagee from the framework of historical Christianity, we would consider him the anti-Luther. Luther advocated expelling Jews unless they converted to Christianity and at the end of his essay, *The Jews and Their Lies*, said that the Jews were “possessed by all devils.” John Hagee, however, has not only taken a favorable position on the Jews, but also the extreme opposite position, insomuch that Hagee does not even consider it necessary to preach the gospel to the Jews:

I’m not trying to convert the Jewish people to the Christian faith...In fact, trying to convert Jews is a waste of time. Jews already have a covenant with God and that has never been replaced by Christianity (Furse 2015, 88, from *Houston Chronicle*, April 30, 1988, sec 6, pg.1).

Also, Hagee stated in his 2007 book, *In Defense of Israel – The Bible’s Mandate to Support the Jewish State*, “It is time for Christians everywhere to recognize that that nation of Israel will never convert to Christianity and join the Baptist church in their home town” (Hagee 2007, 148). According to Hagee, the Jews do not even need the gospel of Christ to be saved. Regardless of one’s religious views, this is very odd for a supposedly Evangelical preacher to say – that there are certain people who can go to heaven without Jesus. Judaism’s main distinction from Christianity is that it rejects Jesus Christ as the Messiah and blasphemes and mocks him in the Talmud. Where does Hagee get this odd plan of salvation for the Jews? It is based on their fleshly inheritance, and this was obtained from none other than the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Hagee has also made other claims regarding Judaism. In an ad for *In Defense of Israel* following its publishing, Hagee states the following:

In Defense of Israel will shape Christian theology. It scripturally proves that the Jewish people as a whole did not reject Jesus as Messiah. It will also prove that Jesus did not come to earth to be the Messiah... Since Jesus refused by word and deed to claim to be the Messiah, how can the Jews be blamed for rejecting what was never offered? (LeadersFollow Jesus Christ, 2015).

Hagee claims that Jesus Christ did not come to earth to be the Messiah and even refused to declare so. This is not true however. In John 4 Jesus comes across the Samaritan woman at the well:

25 The woman saith unto him [Jesus], I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all thing. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

This scripture and John 1:41 also tell us that "messiah" means "Christ." Jesus clearly told the woman at the well he was the Messiah. Did he only let her in on this fact and not tell the Jews? No, he told them also in Mark 14:

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

To say that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah is to not know the gospels. Jesus made known his identity to the Pharisees and Sadducees, but the Bible makes it clear that he was rejected. It is true that not all the Jews rejected him because the gospels do record instances, such as in John 8:30-31, where many of the Jews believed in him.

Hagee's beliefs are not uncommon in Christianity in modern America, particularly advocating that the United States government should support the nation of Israel financially and militarily, lest we incur the wrath of God on our nation. However, Hagee's claim that Jesus never

claimed to be the Messiah has been proven false, and as will later be shown, his, Darby's, and Scofield's interpretation of Genesis 12, God's promise to Abraham, is also fallible.

Zionism in American Politics

Israel is considered to be America's greatest ally in the Middle East. Politicians from both sides of the political spectrum have offered prolific speeches advocating love and support for the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. In fact, some politicians even consider America and Israel's interests as essentially one and the same and Christianity and Judaism as sister religions.

In September 2014, Ted Cruz attended a conference in Washington D.C. called "In Defense of Christians." This particular group consisted mostly of Christians of Middle Eastern descent, and he delivered the keynote address to bring to attention the threats and persecution that Christians in the Middle East face from radical Islam. The speech had a decent start and was well tolerated until Cruz started talking about Israel. Cruz told the crowd, "Christians have no greater ally than the Jewish state." This generated a great deal of controversy among the crowd, many of them booing, to which Cruz answered, "Let me say this – those who hate Israel hate America, and those who hate Jews hate Christians." The rest of the speech was bombarded by mixtures of applause, booing, and hissing, but before Cruz walked off the stage, he told the audience, "If you will not stand with Israel and the Jews, then I will not stand with you" (yazakchattiest, 2014).

Would someone really support a foreign country above his or her own? A 2015 Bloomberg Politics National Poll indicates that the answer is "yes." This particular poll asked respondents about Israeli versus U.S. interests. 47% responded with "Israel is an ally, but we should pursue America's interests when we disagree with them." However, 45% responded with

“Israel is an important ally, the only democracy in the region, and we should support it even if our interests diverge.” Republicans prefer Israel’s interests 67% to 30%, while 64% of Democrats believe the U.S. must pursue its own interest above Israel’s (Bloomberg Politics Poll 2015). This could likely be explained by the tendency of Evangelical Christians to be Republicans, but still roughly a third of Democrats would support Israel’s interests over America’s. This large segment of the population has had profound effects on foreign affairs. What can explain this mentality besides the dispensational theology and Zionism advocated by the Scofield Reference Bible? The footnotes in it seem to advocate blessing physical Israel, but is this what the text, particularly of the New Testament, teaches? Are the Jews really God’s chosen people?

A Biblical Analysis of Israel and the Identity of God’s Chosen People

From a Christian and Biblical perspective, the New Testament does not teach the blessing of fleshly descendants of Abraham. In fact, the Bible tells its readers in Titus 3:9 and 1 Timothy 1:4 to avoid genealogies:

Neither give heed to fables and *endless genealogies*, which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: so do...But avoid foolish questions, and *genealogies*, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

If the New Testament teaches that a person’s ancestry is not only unimportant, but also generates strife, then how can Christian pastors teach the blessing of physical Jews without being concerned about their genealogies, that is, their descending from Abraham? Both John the Baptist and Jesus acknowledged the irrelevance of one’s ancestry in regard to the kingdom of God. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:9, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these

stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” In John 8, Jesus even acknowledged that the

Pharisees and Sadducees were physically descended from Abraham:

37 I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have on Father, even God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.

Being called the sons of the Devil is a far cry from being the chosen people of God. Jesus acknowledged their Abrahamic genealogy and essentially told them it was meaningless. He did not tell them that their ethnicity was a curse as did many of early church fathers and Christian leaders, but neither was it grounds for any particular blessing or automatic access to the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul was clear that there was nothing wrong with being a Jew ethnically. In Romans 11:1, he states, “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I am also an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Paul, one of the greatest Christians of the New Testament, was ethnically a Jew. The answer is not that having a particular ethnicity or ancestor blesses or damns, but that they are *irrelevant*.

To whom then does the promise of Genesis 12 pertain? The New Testament does teach a blessing upon Israel, but who is Israel? In Romans 9, Paul tells his readers who the chosen ones are:

6 ...For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac, shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of promise are counted for the seed.

Paul describes a spiritual Israel in Romans 11 that comprises of both Jews and Gentiles. It is a natural tree with natural branches with the wild olive branches being grafted in. The natural branches are the Jews and the Gentiles the wild olive branches. Just because someone is ethnically a Jew does not mean he or she is part of spiritual Israel. Jesus references this spiritual kingdom when he rebukes the Pharisees in Matthew 21:43, saying, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Jesus refers to spiritual Israel, the children of promise, the chosen people of God, *both* Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3 makes this abundantly clear:

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham...16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ...26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The blessing of Abraham and his seed as described in Genesis 12 are made clear by Galatians 3. The blessing applies to Abraham and his (singular) seed, Jesus Christ, and anyone who believes in Christ. In the New Testament, the physical has now become the spiritual and belief in Christ is the only requirement for being called the children of God and His chosen ones. According to the Bible, Christians are the chosen people of God in the New Testament.

It is not anti-Semitic to say that one's genealogy makes no difference. Although the New Testament certainly condemns rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, it does not promote anti-Semitism, or any kind of ethnic hatred. Romans 12:18 commands, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." It is true that Judaism rejects Christ as the Messiah. In fact, Romans 11:28 even calls Jews the enemies of the gospel. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." From the Christian's perspective, God loves the Jews and wants them to accept Jesus Christ as

their Messiah. According to John 3:16, the world is beloved by God. Even though the Jews are called the enemies of the gospel, Jesus commanded Christians to love their enemies. Examining the scriptures without prejudice (i.e. not through the lens of Martin Luther or C.I. Scofield) is key for responding to both anti-Semitism and Israelmania. However, it is time for Christians to embrace their destiny as God's chosen people.

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All Bible verses are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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